

Disapproving Anti-Japanese Agitation

by
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EVEN FROM THE VIEWPOINT of one who deprecates the present anti-Japanese agitation as indefensible, both politically, morally and as a matter of economics, there is much to commend in the article on this subject published in THE VOTER of November 1, 1919.

First, there is the reasonableness and moderation that distinguish it, while the statement that the Japanese, possessed as they are of signal "patriotism and an intense pride, justified by high intelligence and a lofty spirit, combined with the will and the ability to force recognition of their equality, brook no treatment as inferiors in the family of races" is exactly true. It defines a situation that the rest of the world will have to deal with, and on our manner of meeting it will depend our future relations with a powerful and hitherto friendly nation, also perhaps the peace of the world.

I take exception only to the word "Governmental" in The Voter's imputation to the Japanese of a desire to extend their "influence into all parts of the world into which they come into close communication." I contend that, while they are building up their foreign commerce with marvelous ability and conspicuous success, and while, as the natural result of their love of country, they wish not only to increase its prosperity and influence, but also to impress the outside world with the art and literature of their own land, there is no evidence whatever of their desire to take part in the government of other nations. And I can not but think that the tendency of the Japanese to live their own simple industrious lives, largely in agricultural pursuits, adding to the supply of food which is so greatly needed in the world, without any ambition to govern the country, is a point in their favor as immigrants. For my part, I prefer them to those incomers from one of the British Isles who have been so very successful in controlling some of our great municipalities (needless to say that I refer to their success in gaining control rather than to their man-

agement after they have done so). I think they are more to be desired than those other aliens who come here, acquire the right to vote, and then as members of communities that are hostile to the genius of our Government, pertinaciously insist that a malefactor shall sit in the Halls of Congress; I deem them less objectionable than those unhappy people of Southeastern Europe who have had the life and character crushed out of them under ages of tyranny, so that they prefer continued existence in filth and squalor to higher standards of living, in spite of all inducements that are offered them thereto. And it goes without saying, I think, that we might better welcome the Japanese than the anarchists of Russia and contiguous countries who conspire to abolish all government and reduce the world to chaos, many of whom we are now finding it necessary to deport at risks far greater than many of us appreciate. The Rev. U. G. Murphy of Seattle, remarks in a pamphlet recently published, "No one ever heard of a Japanese having anything to do with any kind of anarchistic movement."

So it is not the fear of their overturning our Government that afflicts us, but the sense of danger that they may "possess the land" in the way of individual ownership and ultimately drive out our own people. It is also urged that, being a prolific race, their children be denied the right of citizenship that belongs to them under the Constitution of the country in which they are born, lest they increase at such a pace as to imperil the supremacy of those who now control the country. And before we join in a crusade against the Japanese it behooves us to enquire whether there be just cause for either of these contentions.

In the first place, I have confidence in the power of the great American people to take care of themselves, to continue the upbuilding of a noble race of men, having behind it a mixed ancestry but containing heroic elements, and ultimately to control, by amalgamation as far as possible, by domination, and as a last resort by deportation, so far as the public safety may require, all sorts and conditions of men that come here. I believe they can manage the 8,785,000 immigrants from all countries who arrived here in the first decade of this century, even though that number included 62,432 members of this dangerous Japanese race, amounting almost to three-

fourths of one per cent of the whole. My confidence in that capacity of theirs for self-protection is such as to convince me that the presence in the country of some 100,000 Japanese—about one-tenth of one per cent of its population—is no menace to their safety or their well being or their complete independence. This faith is all the stronger when I reflect that these 100,000 people represent the net result of nearly forty years of practically unrestricted immigration which began in 1870 and ended in 1907. The effect of the so-called Gentlemen's agreement, arrived at in that year, was such that during the next succeeding six years—1908 to 1913, inclusive—there were more departures than arrivals—31,777 who went out against 30,985 who came in. And anyone who believes that the descendants of 100,000 Japanese can in any calculable number of generations, have any appreciable influence for harm on the descendants of 110,000,000 of the powerful amalgamated race that now occupies the United States, must, it seems to me, have lost all sense of proportion, as the result perhaps of too much contemplation of the prolificness (to use a word of Herbert Spencer's) of the Japanese in comparison with the effect of race suicide and birth control and the doctrines of the Rev. T. R. Malthus on the great American people.

Now as to land ownership, the figures are almost, if not quite as significant as in the case of immigration. I refuse to believe that the proprietorship by the Japanese of 28,000 acres of farm land and the cultivation by them under lease or contract of some 200,000 to 250,000 acres, out of a total of 29,000,000 acres of arable land by some 24,500 Japanese are fraught with peril to the 2,615,000 people that are estimated as making up the population of California.

Is there any one of the readers of The Voter who thinks that the interests of the sovereign State of Oregon are likely to suffer because its population of 672,765 (in 1910) included 4,308 Japanese who operated 172 farms having a total acreage of 6,477, of which they owned 2,793? Or is there any member of that splendid community of 8,500 souls who occupy the Hood River Valley, who is disturbed as to his own safety or that of his children or his children's children because

312 people out of the 8,500 are Japanese, and because they farm 1,697 acres out of 20,000?

Mr. H. A. Millis, Professor of Economics in the University of Chicago, in his book entitled, "The Japanese Problem in the United States," published in 1915, says of the Japanese in Oregon: "In general there is a spirit of toleration and in some instances there is a visiting back and forth between Japanese and Americans. At Hood River was found as favorable an opinion as was met with anywhere. Occasionally, it is said, some one complains of Japanese land purchases, but it is not taken seriously. The Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, coming from California in 1910, commended them highly and ranked them above the Greeks and Italians in point of desirability."

I visited Hood River a few weeks ago myself and saw many of the leading citizens of that place, who assured me that there was no cause of complaint of the Japanese, who were peaceful, orderly and industrious people, living in harmony with their fellow ranchmen, belonging to and marketing their products through the Association. One man said to me, "They generally prefer raw land on account of its being cheaper and turn it into productive farms, which are often for sale, and I deem them a distinct advantage to the community." Having this remark in mind and considering how much of this anti-Japanese agitation is of political origin, I could not but recall the well-worn aphorism that "he who makes two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind than the whole race of politicians put together." And it did seem to me, in the light of what this man told me about their taking non-producing land and making it productive, that they are the very benefactors that Dean Swift might have had in mind—making two ears of corn grow where *none* grew before.

And I submit that, especially in these days of food scarcity when many millions of people are facing starvation, it would be a crime to prevent the Japanese or any other nation or tribe from augmenting the supply of that commodity of which the world stands in such dire need. I say "especially at this time," but I ask if we are justified in doing at any time and under any circumstances that which this country is doing now, namely, curtailing

production, encouraging idleness and putting a penalty on industry. It will take very powerful and drastic legislation to protect the indolent against the competition of the industrious, and the success of such legislation would mean the failure of our nation and our race. We are courting failure, we are hastening the decadence of our nation when, instead of matching industry with industry and increasing our efforts to gather her treasures from the earth by efficient and intelligent labor, we choose to live upon accumulated wealth and reduce work to a minimum. The argument against Japanese exclusion is an argument in favor of encouraging feebleness in ourselves instead of strength.

The only other point in the economic view that I wish to touch upon is that the prosperity of this country is largely dependent upon its foreign trade. Commercial relations between individuals in the two countries are of the friendliest character. Portland and the coast generally are offering every inducement to the Japanese to deal with us. We are now striving to persuade them to send their steamers to this port. The imports into the United States from Japan rose from \$208,000,000 in 1917 to \$304,000,000 in 1919, our exports from \$54,000,000 in 1914 to \$130,000,000 in 1917, and \$326,000,000 in 1919, and we are bending all our energies to the further increase of this mutually satisfactory business. Is it good economics to treat these clients in such fashion as to induce them to turn the current of this vast and growing reciprocal trade into other channels? And supposing that present conditions are unsatisfactory to us, is it good policy to try and change them by a campaign of vilification and abuse? Wouldn't it be better to approach a friendly nation in a friendly way, and suggest a modification of existing agreements? I think I am safe in saying that Japan values the friendship of the United States so highly that she will make any reasonable concession to meet the views of our people. When a few years ago it appeared that a certain proposed treaty of arbitration between Great Britain and the United States was in conflict with the conditions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, it was at Japan's request that the terms of that covenant were so modified as to permit the enactment of our treaty of arbitration. "This," says Colonel Roosevelt, "was Japan's contribution to universal peace." And if we

will only approach her in the same conciliatory spirit in which she has always met us we shall find that she will make further contributions still.

But the question is above all one of morals, transcending all other considerations, economic, political or commercial. Voluntarily and without coercion, the United States entered into a treaty with Japan by which her citizens were guaranteed the same rights and privileges as those accorded to the citizens of other countries. And having made such solemn engagement, it is immoral, dishonorable and subversive of that good faith among nations on which international comity depends, that we should violate or evade this obligation by any indirection. And that is precisely what California did in passing her alien land law of May, 1913, the enactment of which Mr. Wilson and his Secretary of State made such strenuous but ineffectual efforts to prevent. It is exactly what has more than once been attempted in the State of Oregon and is threatened now. I don't believe that such legislation would carry in either state if the people were fully informed of the facts and realized the flagrant bad faith of such action. It should be the task of all good citizens and of the press to enlighten the public mind and to build up a sentiment that shall maintain the honor of the nation and not permit the breaking of its solemn covenants.